

Appendix I - Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) Template

SECTION 1 - Defining the activity subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016

1A. Name of Public Authority.

Department for Communities – Housing Supply Policy

1B. Please provide a short title which describes the activity being undertaken by the Public Authority that is subject to Section 1(1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016.

Development of a new definition of Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland

1C. Please indicate which category the activity specified in Section 1B above relates to.

Developing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Adopting a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Implementing a	Policy <input type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Revising a	Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Strategy <input type="checkbox"/>	Plan <input type="checkbox"/>
Designing a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delivering a Public Service	<input type="checkbox"/>		

1D. Please provide the official title (if any) of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service document or initiative relating to the category indicated in Section 1C above.

Revised definition of Affordable housing in Northern Ireland

1E. Please provide details of the aims and/or objectives of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service.

The current definition was drafted to reflect the affordable housing products available at the time of its development, namely social rented housing and shared ownership housing. An updated definition of affordable housing will enable the needs of a wider range of groups, some of whom are not currently finding their needs adequately met by the market, to be taken into account.

1F. What definition of 'rural' is the Public Authority using in respect of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Population Settlements of less than 5,000 (Default definition).

Other Definition (Provide details and the rationale below).

A definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

Details of alternative definition of 'rural' used.

N/A

Rationale for using alternative definition of 'rural'.

N/A

Reasons why a definition of 'rural' is not applicable.

N/A

SECTION 2 - Understanding the impact of the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

2A. Is the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service likely to impact on people in rural areas?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **2E**.

2B. Please explain how the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas.

The Department seeks to find innovative ways to address housing stress and increase housing supply, as set out in the draft Programme for Government, including increasing the range of affordable housing options. To this end Housing Division has prepared a stakeholder engagement paper for consultation on proposals for an updated definition of “affordable housing” in the Northern Ireland context. This should give housing providers with clearer definition of affordable housing and enable housing providers and planners to take a more flexible approach to developing housing options that address a wider range of housing needs.

Agreeing a revised definition of Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland is likely to have a positive impact on people in rural areas as it will complement the work being undertaken by NIHE to assess rural housing need and assist housing providers by increasing housing options that address a wider range of housing need.

2C. If the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently from people in urban areas, please explain how it is likely to impact on people in rural areas differently.

As part of its research into addressing housing need in rural areas the NIHE concluded that an urban approach may not always work in a rural context. There are often higher concentrations of owner occupiers, elderly people and a general lack of affordable housing options that require a more flexible approach.

Agreeing a new definition of Affordable Housing in Northern Ireland may have a positive impact on people in rural areas by increasing housing options that address a wider range of housing need.

2D. Please indicate which of the following rural policy areas the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is likely to primarily impact on.

Rural Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Tourism	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Jobs or Employment in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education or Training in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broadband or Mobile Communications in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport Services or Infrastructure in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health or Social Care Services in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deprivation in Rural Areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Crime or Community Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rural Development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agri-Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please state)	<input type="text"/>

If the response to Section 2A was YES GO TO Section 3A.**2E. Please explain why the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service is NOT likely to impact on people in rural areas.**

N/A

SECTION 3 - Identifying the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

3A. Has the Public Authority taken steps to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas that are relevant to the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service?

Yes No If the response is **NO** GO TO Section **3E**.

3B. Please indicate which of the following methods or information sources were used by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Consultation with Rural Stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	Published Statistics	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consultation with Other Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Papers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveys or Questionnaires	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Publications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Methods or Information Sources (include details in Question 3C below).			<input type="checkbox"/>

3C. Please provide details of the methods and information sources used to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas including relevant dates, names of organisations, titles of publications, website references, details of surveys or consultations undertaken etc.

The Department has reviewed a number of sources to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas, including statistics produced by the Department and the NIHE, such as, the [Households Below Average Income report](#), [Family Resources Survey Urban Rural Report](#) and the [House Conditions Survey](#).

The Department also took cognisance of the Housing Executive's Rural Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020. In developing this Strategy the Housing Executive utilised a wide variety of information sources, including consulting with rural stakeholders and other organisations, surveys and questionnaires and resource papers.

The Department will be consulting on proposals for a new definition of affordable housing. The Department will ensure this exercise includes rural stakeholders and representatives.

3D. Please provide details of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas which have been identified by the Public Authority?

In order to inform analysis of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas the DfC and the NIHE identified the following key statistics:

- Between NI Census' in 2001 and 2011, the rural population increased by 15%, the urban population increased by 7%; and the age profile of people aged 65 continued to increase.
- Average weekly incomes are on average lower in rural areas, particularly in the west of the province where almost 24% of individuals with low income (average weekly income below £264) reside;
- The proportion of urban housing in the social sector was 20%. In rural areas in 2016 approximately 7% of the stock was in the social sector. This pattern was similar to 2011 findings.
- There was little variation between the types of household living in urban and rural areas, although households with children were more likely to live in urban areas.
- More than one-third (35%; 34% in 2011) of occupied dwellings were in rural areas. Again most age groups showed little variation from the average with the exception of the 25 to 39 age group which had a lower than average proportion (27%) living in this location
- Household reference persons who were not working, and who were permanently sick/ disabled or looking after family/home were least likely to live in rural areas (both 32%; compared with 35% overall).
- Households with annual incomes of £46,800 were most likely to live in rural areas (41%), while those with annual incomes of up to £10,399 (31%) were least likely to live in rural areas.
- There was a significant rise in the level of unfitness in the private sector housing stock in rural areas from 60% to 68% in 2016.
- In 2016 a much higher rate of fuel poverty was found in rural areas (32%; 44% in 2011) compared with urban areas (16%; 41% in 2011). The highest rate of fuel poverty was found in households living in small villages, hamlets or in open country areas (34%).

The majority of this Statistical information is drawn from NISRA census-based data, the Housing Executive's 2016 House Condition Survey Northern Ireland and the Housing Market Review & Perspective and the Family Resources Survey (FRS) urban/rural publication.

If the response to Section 3A was YES GO TO Section 4A.

3E. Please explain why no steps were taken by the Public Authority to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas?

N/A

SECTION 4 - Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas

4A. Please provide details of the issues considered in relation to the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

The provision of decent affordable homes (for sale or rent) is critical in sustaining vibrant rural communities and improving social, environmental and economic well-being.

DfC recognises that housing challenges cannot be addressed by Government alone, and partners such as the NI Housing Executive, housing associations, councils, private developers and private landlords, lenders and the housing advice sector must play a part in the development of affordable housing options.

It is anticipated that changes to the definition of affordable housing which capture wider products offered/under consideration will complement the NIHE rural strategy, the DfC Public Land for Housing Project and, more generally, help deliver the Programme for Government targets to address housing need and increase housing supply.

SECTION 5 - Influencing the Policy, Strategy, Plan or Public Service

5A. Has the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, been influenced by the rural needs identified?

Yes No If the response is **NO GO TO Section 5C.**

5B. Please explain how the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or delivery of the Public Service, has been influenced by the rural needs identified.

DfC and its delivery partner NIHE has taken account of the social and economic needs of people in rural areas as identified in section 3(d) in relation to financial poverty, increasing levels of people over 65 in rural areas, social isolation, fuel poverty and social/affordable housing need in rural areas.

The current definition of affordable housing is restricted to social and intermediate (shared ownership) products. The DfC "Definition of Affordable Housing" consultation proposes an overarching definition under which a wider range affordable products, would be captured.

It is anticipated these changes will complement the NIHE rural strategy, and other initiatives, such as DfC Public Land for Housing Project and, more generally, help deliver the Programme for Government targets to address housing need and increase housing supply.

The Department in partnership with NIFHA published a draft thinkpiece with the aim of furthering debate and discussion about how mixed tenure might be mainstreamed in Northern Ireland. There are clear benefits in taking a mixed tenure approach to housing development which can increase the financial viability of smaller sites more suited to addressing affordable housing requirements in rural areas. Mixed tenure developments help sustain rural communities by providing a greater variety of housing options for households in rural areas and households on lower incomes.

If the response to Section **5A** was **YES GO TO Section 6A.**

5C. Please explain why the development, adoption, implementation or revising of the Policy, Strategy or Plan, or the design or the delivery of the Public Service, has NOT been influenced by the rural needs identified.

N/A

SECTION 6 - Documenting and Recording

6A. Please tick below to confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained by the Public Authority and relevant information on the Section 1 activity compiled in accordance with paragraph 6.7 of the guidance.

I confirm that the RNIA Template will be retained and relevant information compiled.



Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Sharon McAleenon
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Division/Branch	Housing Supply Unit
Signature:	<i>Sharon McAleenon</i>
Date:	24 June 2019
Rural Needs Impact Assessment approved by:	Donna Knowles
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Division/Branch:	Housing Supply Unit
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Date:	24 June 2019